

## [\*\*After the Fall of 1983\*\*](#) by [\*\*GallifreyanFairytale\*\*](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Coping, Coping with trauma, Gen, Post-Season/Series 01, Season/Series 02 Spoilers, coping methods, pretty much everyone has anxiety now let's be real here ok, the ships are not the main focus, these poor kids

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Dustin Henderson, Jonathan Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2017-10-29

**Updated:** 2017-10-29

**Packaged:** 2022-04-02 01:48:00

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,220

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

they were just kids who had been through something kids should never have to go through. but they found ways to cope.

## After the Fall of 1983

### Author's Note:

This does include spoilers for season 2, but they aren't very major because this is about the kids coping with what happened in season 1. So the spoilers are pretty much just in episode 1 (and maybe 2?) But anyways I had a lot of feelings watching 2x01 and so I wrote this

Will used crayons and colored pencils. He drew what he had seen while he was in the Upside Down and he drew what he saw during his “episodes” as his mom called them. He drew how he *felt*, when the other kids looked at him like he was a freak and the adults treated him like he was ready to break at any given moment. He drew his nightmares and he drew the happy thoughts that chased his nightmares away. He drew what he thought El would have looked like from the descriptions his friends gave him. He drew the Demogorgon and then he drew it wearing a ridiculous hat to make it seem a little less scary. Will Byers used crayons and colored pencils to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Nancy used pencils and notebooks. She started it out like a diary, putting everything she'd experienced as well as what she'd learned from the others down on the pages so she wouldn't forget as time went on. She *couldn't* forget. Then her simple retelling turned into poems about Barbara and her short time in the Upside Down. Her writing was filled with imagery to rival many novelists. Her poems held words that she knew she could never let anyone read, but it helped her sort out her thoughts and she knew that it would keep her from forgetting *exactly* how she was feeling, no matter how much time would pass. Nancy Wheeler used pencils and notebooks to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Mike used his walkie-talkie. He started the first day after El sacrificed

herself to defeat the Demogorgon, started on Day 1. He spoke into the walkie-talkie while it was turned to a channel no one else would use as if El could hear him. Maybe she could, somehow. If Mike really *had* seen her through the window that night, maybe she could hear him. Maybe. But whether she could hear him or not, it helped Mike to pretend that he was able to talk to her about everything that was going on. It made him feel like there was someone out there who could understand. Mike Wheeler used his walkie-talkie to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Jonathan used his new camera. He could never thank Nancy enough for the gift she had given him as it was what kept him sane sometimes. If he captured just the right moment, just the right smile, it looked as if none of this terrible stuff had ever really happened. He hung his favorite pictures up on the wall of his bedroom and would look at it to trick himself into thinking everything was normal. As Bob weaved himself into more and more of the pictures, it got easier for Jonathan to pretend. Maybe Jonathan wasn't a big fan of Bob, but he couldn't deny that he brought some twisted sense of normality to the family that had no hope to ever be normal again. Jonathan Byers used his new camera to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

El used the TV. She would spend hours upon hours watching whatever she found most interesting, sometimes repeating words that she didn't understand or words she liked. Not that there was much to do besides watch TV. But when she watched the pictures on the screen, El could care about that world for just a little bit instead of caring about her own. She didn't use to spend her whole day watching TV, but she found the feeling of not caring for a bit intoxicating and found herself spending nearly all of her time in front of the TV, where she didn't have to care or worry about anything except remembering the words she didn't understand so she could look them up later. Eleven used the TV to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Steve used Nancy. Of course, his feelings for her were very real, so he wasn't *using* her so much as *relying on* her to distract him from everything that had happened. When Steve was with Nancy, at least he was with someone who knew without him having to break the law and tell her. When Steve was with Nancy, the other kids didn't make comments to his face (most likely because they were all hiding jealousy, Steve saw the way they looked at him and Nancy). Nancy understood without words, and that was exactly what Steve needed: Someone who he didn't have to talk to for them to understand. They had been through at least a little bit of what had happened together, so they knew. They just *knew*. Steve *relied on* Nancy to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Lucas used music. He would put headphones over his ears, turn up the volume so he couldn't hear anything else, and the music would clear his mind of unwanted thoughts. Sometimes, when his parents got home a few minutes too late, or when Will left with his mom to go home after the sun had set, Lucas' mind ran wild as if preparing for the worst. Lucas knew it was all paranoia and nothing bad was going to happen... but what if something did? Music would stop the worries from doing too much damage to Lucas' mind as long as it was loud enough that Lucas couldn't think of anything else. If he could only think about music, then he couldn't worry, and he could pretend that nothing bad had ever happened in the quiet town of Hawkins, Indiana. Lucas Sinclair used music to cope with what happened in the fall of 1983.

Dustin used his cat. Mews was a good listener (most of the time) and couldn't exactly tell anyone else about the Upside Down or the Demogorgon or Eleven or whatever else Dustin told him about. Dustin could talk to Mews for hours and Mews would either sit in a chair, lay on the ground, or sit in Dustin's lap. It was nice to talk without having to hold a conversation, or even a coherent thought, sometimes. Mews didn't care if Dustin mumbled or trailed off in the middle of a sentence, and Mews didn't make fun of how Dustin spoke before his teeth grew back in. It seemed as if Mews *knew* Dustin needed someone to talk to. Whether he'd had a bad day at school, or

if he was feeling paranoid about an impossible Demogorgon attack, or he needed to talk about some irrelevant topic in order to stop thinking about the events surrounding Will's disappearance, Mews was there. Dustin Henderson used his cat to cope with the what happened in the fall of 1983.

The kids all had their ways to cope with the scars left on their minds. They figured out how to deal with paranoia and anxiety until it just seemed *normal* to them. They were smart enough to cope without breaking the agreement they made to not tell anyone about what *really* happened when Will disappeared. They relied on each other or on the coping mechanism of their choice, and for the most part, no one suspected they were still suffering from the after effects of the fall of 1983.